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Cutting and Running in Iraq Not an Option Rasputin, the Mad Monk

I'm sick of liberals in the media criticizing the war in Iraq simply because it has taken almost five years, cost trillions of dollars, and—less importantly—over 3000 American lives. Every time I turn on the television set, I see Hollywood liberals debating amongst themselves over whether or not the Iraq war has been a debacle, a fiasco, or a travesty. If these elitist liberal anti-American nutesees would trade in their thesaurus for a pair of balls, we might be getting somewhere. I once had a pair of balls, but according to Wikipedia, they were cut off by my assassins.

The truth of the matter is that the war in Iraq is only in its preliminary phase. The Trojan War lasted ten years, and it only involved one relatively small city (as we now know from the groundbreaking archaeological discoveries of Heinrich Eichmann). How many cities are there in Iraq? Ten? If so, the war in Iraq will last at least one hundred years (10 cities multiplied by 10 years equals, *ipso facto*, 100 years). Such an undertaking will no doubt seem daunting to the average coward, but for men of resolve and determination, it will seem at least

vaguely within the realm of possibility. Allow me to relate a personal anecdote.

I had become quite an influential figure within the country of Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century, so much so that a certain elite faction with vested interests spared no expense in having me killed. First they tried to poison me. They did this by placing cyanide (this of course being before the discovery of plutonium) in my yogurt, enough to kill at least 10 men. I, however, ate my portion in its entirety and, much to the shock and surprise of my would-be killers, refilled my bowl and ate some more. The poison had the same effect on me as facts and reality have on the Bush administration: none whatsoever. Had my assassins been effeminate Democrats, they would have given up and gone off to complain to the media. But they didn't. No, they were proto-Republicans, and they bravely carried on in a most uncowardly fashion.

After I finished my second helping of yogurt, I was shot in the neck. The bullet severed my jugular and blood shot out of my wound like water out of a sprinkler. This, however, did not kill me. I turned around, grabbed the man who held the pistol, strangled him, and then jumped out of the win-

dow and ran away. Rather than give up and complain to the media, my remaining assassins ran after me and beat me with clubs, almost as if I were a prisoner at Guantonomo Bay. And yet, according to Wikipedia, still I stubbornly clung to life.

Once they grew tired of beating me with their clubs, my assassins eventually castrated me and threw me in a river. It was a particularly cold Russian winter, and the water was quite chilly. Fortunately, I was able to avoid the embarrassing physiological response which generally accompanies being submerged in cold water; for, as Wikipedia reminds us, I had no testicles, and therefore no testicles to shrink. After drifting downstream for two days, a battered and ball-less parody of my former self, my determination to live finally abated and I drowned to death. Now let's imagine a cast of liberals and Hollywood hedonists in the role of the assassins and see how the scenario plays out. Why, I bet the scenario would play out something like this:

DAN RATHER: So, uh, I guess we should poison him?

AL SHARPTON: I'm nervous.

DAN RATHER: Me too.

SUSAN SARADON: I'm going home.

DAN RATHER: Yeah, me too.

AL SHARPTON: I'm going to CNN headquarters to complain in front of a camera crew.

DAN RATHER: Good idea.

AL SHARPTON: I'm a loser.

The entire Democratic Party is nothing more than an obscene congregation of treacherous scum. If either Hilary Clinton or Barack Obama are elected president, the moral integrity of the United States will collapse instantaneously. As soon as a Democrat is placed in office, they will immediately begin collaborating with the Islamo-Fascist enemy, and the country will quickly degenerate into a vast hedonistic Hollywood orgy ruled under shari law. It's important that we continue to elect Republicans and that we continue to fight in Iraq until the job is done. To not channel all our resources into this seemingly unending conflict would be an act of self-destructiveness unparalleled in the history of humanity. *

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- * « There's always some element of undisputable truth to all her statements » (p. 8).

Untitled

Julio

flocks of wild women and men
revolve submerged in the lush arabesques
of dreamt Chiang Mai:
whirled seduced by the sharp shells and
blurry enamel of priceless clouds.
the treasure that steals kisses
from their sleepy yawns;
starlit arrows, dewy pearls at dawn
for evidence.
blush'd clouds confess thunder dreams and
falling rain love, of floods of laughs and kiss cascades
that all devout - as we - looking for cover
wandered about those that naked played away
caring not for pneumonia
or our umbrellas.

In summer

Meghan Sbrocchi

In summer
Another way of telling
Warmth
The light on your shoulder, and
Studies in certain emotion, a nonlinguistic feature, ambiguous
And now we've felt it
And now it's over

Compose Me

Michael Beeler

I see him, perched on the piano bench. His fingers dance over ivory, eyes closed, swerving fluidly, forming and following the music, and loving it, or something, deeply. The notes tell a story. I hear longing and loneliness, gentle affection, but not enough. Rain-drops now. A wet face in forest mist,

searching for its body, for it's missing parts. My face? Is it sought or seeking?

The notes tell a story—I wish it was his story I heard, but I know better. I hear what I want to hear. I insert myself into his songs, I want to be them, I want to be remade, to be his creation, to capture and

move him, to be loved as they are.

I want to sit with him, rest my chin on his shoulder, run my arms down his, merging our finger tips, and play. My body melts into his. His mind is naked. Each cord is an electric jolt of cerebral magic. I sigh softly, wishing I could release my soul into

the room and whisper silently, Let me love you—let me be the air that carries your song. Let me be that intimate, and that invisible. *

Having More Company Than You Can Keep

Andrew Rampersaud

They're the shoulder you cry on, the people you laugh with, and the ones you trust. You know these people and they might know you even better; they're your friends.

You may have a lot of them: friends you've had since grade school, high school friends, work friends, new people you've met at university, best friends, friends of friends, friends with benefits. It seems no matter who you are you can never have too many friends.

Or can you? Variety is the spice of life, and meeting new people and networking does create a fertile ground to plant these seeds. But as life

as a person's social network can be, it can get difficult to reap what you sow. Now I'm not saying people are busting down my door to hangout with me, but there's a certain amount of time we get everyday to juggle school, work, a relationship, family, and the time we spend alone. Digging up those extra hours to fit everyone into a busy schedule gets hectic.

Most people work around their overabundance of friends by harvesting a select few as their closer ones. Everyone else lost in the shuffle become acquaintances that end up biting the dust. Over time you grow apart from some people, but you also meet new ones. When you can't accommodate this

stew of old and new friends, let alone your closer ones, the problem reinvents itself, and you find out it never really goes away. It's overkill.

You dodge and weave your way around some social invitations. You've heard these before: « *We'll a couple of us are meeting up for drinks this weekend, we'd really like it if you could make it out* » or « *We never hangout anymore* ». Of course, being the good friend you are, you say you'll make it out, or at least you'll try, but you won't; you're just leading them on. After a couple of unreturned phone calls, a string of white lies, a few broken promises, and some unanswered e-mails, you become « *the friendship tease* ».

And nobody wants to be that kind of tease; it just sorta happens. It's an easy trap to fall into; it's hard to figure out the number of friends we have until we realize we don't have time for all them. There's an old *Seinfeld* quote where Jerry goes « *Sorry, I've already got all my friends* », which suggests there's a limit to amount of friends we can have at a given time. And maybe Jerry's right. You can't please everyone. Stick to what you know and also *whom you really know*.

Make friends, enjoy them, but choose them wisely. *



Aplomb in Niagara?

Adnan Khan

The guy next to me smells like cigarettes and is listening to his music too loudly. I can almost feel his ear drums fattening and exploding onto the flannel Greyhound sets. I look at my cigarette stained fingertips and want one between my lips. Lindsay grabs my arms and cuddles it tighter around her shoulder. Her nose vibrates little snores. The Lady wiggles up the bus catwalk and smiles at me before she gets into the bathroom. I hear the hiss of her number 1 over the gravel crunching tires. She washes her hands and steps out.

«Where are you from?» She asks, showing off her yellow teeth.

«Toronto.» I reply. She smiles coyly at my platonic tone.

«Have you been here long?» Her accent sandwiches her words.

«Always.» I think she wants to persist. She smiles, wobbling with the bus's shaking. She smiles again and looks at Lindsay, her eyes dropping over her like weights.

The bus station smells like perfume and gasoline. The man behind us is holding a bouquet of flowers, his eyes rinsed in tears. Lindsay leans on my shoulder.

«I'm sleepy.» She says, her voice caked with fangue.

«I know.» The bus driver is loading the New York bound first. «He'll let us on soon.» In front of us is the Lady. She's standing next to her husband. I can hear little blasts of Urdu. She asks the bus driver what's happen-

ing again. He checks other peoples tickets and answers her, his eyes meeting everyone's but hers.

«New York first. Then Niagara.» He repeats. She asks him the question again, desperate for clarification. He repeats the answer, his voice crisp with indignation.

«Ubi nie hay.» I say. She turns her head to me and smiles and nods. She asks when she'll be loaded on. I tell her after the New York people. Lindsay smiles at me. Her husband nods at me.

Lindsay stretches, her feet tapping those of the person in front of her. Her arms reach for the ceiling: the little gold hairs on her forearm stick straight up and are almost invisible in the golden rays coming through the windows.

«What did she want?» Lindsay asks.

«She was just asking me where I'm from.»

«Why?» Lindsay settles back into her seat, digging through her purse for something to eat. Morning breath wraps around everything she says.

«To make sure I'm not a Paki?» I suggest.

«Shut up! That was nice that you helped her.» Lindsay says.

«I didn't do much.» I brush my actions under a rug. I don't want to dwell on it. Lindsay kisses me on the cheek and crunches a cookie in her teeth. I can see the Lady in the very first seat, her eyes glued to the window.

First the bus gets into St. Catherine, then Niagara Falls. Me and Lindsay get off. The Lady is already out. She has no luggage.

The bus driver stays in the bus. Her eyes focus on me. She waddles over.

«Is the rainbow bridge far from here?» She asks. I wrestle my luggage out of the bus and stand it up on the ground.

«What? I don't know... we're just visiting.»

«Oh, you're not from here?» She stands about a foot under me. A long black hair leaks from her chin and twirls into the air.

«Na... I'm from Toronto.» I repeat. She smiles.

«Rainbow bridge kither hai?» She asks. I reply in English, that I don't know.

«Ask inside, they'll know.»

«Can you please help me? I could not get my visa from America, to visit my other son. They told me to come here, to Buffalo to go to America to get it sorted out.»

«I don't know where it is.» I don't want to give in to anything. «We can go inside and ask.» I say and she smiles at me and follows me and Lindsay. Lindsay smiles at her. She responds in kind. I make my way through the sliding doors and approach the help desk.

«Hi, excuse me! How far is the Rainbow bridge?»

«Half an hour cab ride.»

«How much?»

«Ten bucks.» I walk back to the lady and tell her. She says he has no money. I walk back and ask the teller how far to walk. He says forty five minutes. I tell her. Her eyes round even further and she stares at me, her pupils trying to say that she couldn't possibly walk the distance.

«You can get a cab outside.» I say. I clutch onto my luggage and start wheeling it

out. Lindsay leads.

«Oh, I don't have any money.» She says, translating for her gaze. «I just brought five dollars, they did not tell me where it was... I don't have my bank card, nothing.» I pause. We're standing alone in the frame of a mirror. Someone squeezes past the tight gap between us, probably thinking we're related. «If you could give me ten, twenty dollars... anything.» She says. She begs without showing it. «You could give me your address and I could mail you back the money.» I take a deep breath, staring at Lindsay. She doesn't know what to say to me. How would she know? I open my wallet, the hundred dollars I withdrew yesterday burning a hole through the leather casing.

«I can give you ten...» I say.

«Anything, anything, is fine.»

Thank you, thank you so much.» She smiles and thanks Lindsay. She thanks me again, in Urdu. I hand over the bill, already worn with a million hands. She never asks for my address and withdraws into the folds of the town leaving me with all my doubts. I smile weakly at Lindsay and we make our way to a cab.

«What's wrong?» Lindsay asks.

«Nothing.» I smile and kiss her on the cheek. The suitcase goes into the trunk. On the way back to the bus station, after our weekend trip is over, I won't have the ten dollars for the cab ride. Lindsay will spot me. •

Getting Jacked

William Hertha

I'm starting to get old and realize that if I ever do plan on getting jacked, now is probably the time to do it. There are various ways to enthrone oneself, the best of which I believe is to emulate a hero. Of course, getting jacked does come with responsibilities; Spiderman taught me this. So here is my list of heroes and why they are more than just brawn.

1. Arnie - hail to the king, baby.

Arnie used his jackedness to gain fame and glory. He now does good as the governor and champions whatever causes are in fashion. He's so jacked that he was implicated in a sex scandal while running for governor and overcame it.

2. Rocky - mentally retarded and jacked.

Rocky has values. There's nothing wrong with being able to stand up and say, «here I am.» He tries to teach values to that punk kid in Rocky IV and the kid ignores it. Most people hate on Rocky IV, but I think they just misunderstand it. Rocky knows what is ultimately good and in the interest of happiness.

3. Titus Pullo - he'll fuck you up!

Titus Pullo (of the doomed HBO series «Rome») knows friend from enemy. In the end he exacts true justice by helping his friends and hurting his enemies. He needs no highfalutin explanation of what a friend is; his brain doesn't work like that. Besides, if you don't know who your own friends are,

you fail as a human being.

4. Spartans - so hardcore the word is actually an adjective.

Spartans fought for freedom.

Anyway, on the subway the other day I realized a practical application of getting jacked: it would be useful for bowling over fat people who stand in the doorway while you're trying to get out.

Seriously. It has begun to dawn upon me that force isn't a tool to be shunned. People will get in your way all through life and that's nature. Civilization exists because we've been able to subdue nature through force. Hercules was one of the greatest of mythical characters because he ran out and killed all of the natural enemies who were

antithetical to civilization. How can you account for the growth of civilization when there are gorgons and 3 headed beasts running around?

I have no grand plans of starting my own civilization—though I'm sure I could do a pretty good job at it—but if you see the city as concrete jungle, you have to know how to defend yourself and fight off the barbarians. Barbarians being all those whose existence doesn't coincide with your interest.

As a confession, I've started to give people a good shove when they bump me on the subway or in the street. It's not blatant as I'm sure you bumping into me wasn't on purpose, but seriously, what gives? Tit for tat. •



Remembering Diana, Princess of Wales

Amy Luo

August 31, 2007 will mark the ten-year anniversary of Diana, The Princess of Wales' tragic death. On that day, ten years ago, Diana died at only 36 years old, and the world grieved for the loss of this fresh-faced, girl-next-door Princess. The Princess of Wales was truly a legend - she was a media sensation, a true celebrity, and an icon of grace, charm, and charisma. Her legacy, however, is in no way limited to fashion and style; the world knew her as a worker for over 100 charities and causes, particularly towards homeless and disabled people, children, and HIV/AIDS victims.

Currently, Diana's two sons, Princes William and Harry, are organizing a concert to be held in the memory of their mother on July 1, 2007. It would have been her 46th birthday. The concert will be staged at the soon-to-be rebuilt Wembley Stadium; confirmed acts included Duran Duran, Joss Stone, Elton John, Andrew Lloyd Webber, the English National Ballet, Pharrell Williams and Bryan Ferry. Tickets went on sale on December 13, 2006, and sold out within minutes. A memorial service is planned to be held on August 31, 2007.

Diana Frances Spencer was born on July 1, 1961 in the Sandringham estate in Norfolk, England to Earl Spencer and Frances Althorp. She was educated at the Riddlesworth Hall in Norfolk and at West Heath Girls' School in Sevenoaks, Kent. As a young girl, Diana was regarded as an academically below-average student, having attempted and failed all of her O-levels twice. In 1977, at the age of 16, Diana left West Heath and briefly attended

the Institut Alpin Videmanette, a finishing school in Rougemont, Switzerland - it was around this time that she met her future husband, Charles, Prince of Wales, who was dating her sister Lady Sarah at the time. While in Videmanette, Diana excelled in swimming and diving, and reportedly longed to be a ballerina, but at 5 feet 10 inches, was deemed too tall. Upon completion of her formal education, Diana requested to move to London. Her request was granted before she turned 17, and an apartment was bought for her in the Earls Court area in London, where she lived with her three flatmates until 1981. In that time, she studied for a cordon bleu cooking diploma, and worked at Madame Vacani's Dance Academy in Kensington. Lady Diana also filled time as a cleaner and a cocktail waitress, before finding a job at the Young England Kindergarten.

Diana and Charles were neighbors at Sandringham until 1975, and their families had known each other for many years. They were married on July 29, 1981. The marriage ceremony at St. Paul's Cathedral in London drew a global television and radio audience estimated at around 1000 million people, and hundreds of thousands of people lined the route from Buckingham Palace to the Cathedral. After her marriage, the Princess of Wales quickly became involved in the official duties of the Royal Family. Her first tour with The Prince of Wales was a three-day visit to Wales in October 1981. The Princess subsequently visited many countries including Germany, the US, Pakistan, and South Africa. Diana and Charles' marriage quickly began to fall apart following the birth of their second son, Prince Harry, and in December 1992, they formally announced their separation. Their separation was at first suppressed but then sensationalized by the world media, drawing in chiefly, Camilla Parker Bowles who was confronted by Diana at a society

party. After the separation, Diana based her household and office at Kensington Palace, while The Prince was based at St. James's Palace. In November 1995, the Princess gave a television interview during which she spoke of her unhappiness in her personal life and the pressures of her public role. It was known that Diana was very lonely, and suffered from the eating disorder bulimia. The Prince and Princess were divorced on August 28, 1996.

The tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales occurred on Sunday, August 31, 1997 following a car accident in Paris, France. The vehicle in which the Princess was traveling was involved in a high-speed accident in the Place de l'Alma underpass in central Paris shortly before midnight on Saturday, August 30th. The Princess was taken to La Pitié Salpêtrière Hospital, where she underwent two hours of emergency surgery before being declared dead at 4:00am. The Princess's companion, Mr. Dodi Fayed, and the driver of the vehicle died in the accident, whilst a bodyguard was seriously injured. Her funeral on September 6, 1997, was broadcast and watched by an estimated two and a half billion people worldwide. Diana's final resting place is in the grounds of Althorp Park, her family home.

Although the Princess was renowned for her style and was closely associated with the fashion world, publicizing and raising the profile of younger British designers, she was best known for her charitable work. During her marriage, the Princess was president or patron of over 100 charities. Diana used her influential status to help decrease discrimination against victims of AIDS. In April 1987, the Princess of Wales was one of the first high-profile celebrities to be photographed touching a person infected with HIV. Her contribution to changing the public opinion of AIDS sufferers

was summarized in December 2001 by Bill Clinton at the Diana, Princess of Wales Lecture on AIDS: *"In 1987, when so many still believed that AIDS could be contracted through casual contact, Princess Diana sat on the sickbed of a man with AIDS and held his hand. She showed the world that people with AIDS deserve no isolation, but compassion and kindness. It helped change world's opinion, and gave hope to people with AIDS."* Diana was also very dedicated towards the plight of children who are injured by landmines in Africa. Diana's interest in landmines was focused on the injuries they create, often to children, long after a conflict is over. In August 1997, just days before her death, she visited Bosnia with the Landmine Survivors Network, and the pictures of Diana touring an Angolan minefield just months earlier, in a ballistic helmet and flak jacket were seen worldwide. The hundreds of people she helped felt Diana's tireless charitable work, and it was seen and appreciated by everyone else around the world. It was in recognition of her charity work that representatives of the charities with which she worked during her life were invited to walk behind her coffin with her family from St James's Palace to Westminster Abbey on the day of her funeral.

Diana, The Princess of Wales will always be remembered by the hundreds of people whose lives she touched. She will always be remembered by the world, which witnessed her kindness and compassion towards those in need. Perhaps the words of Elton John's *"Candle in the Wind"* best describes the sentiments felt by those who grieved for the People's Princess.

Goodbye England's rose
May you ever grow in our hearts
You were the grace that placed itself
Where lives were torn apart
You called out to our country
And you whispered to those in pain
Now you belong in heaven
And the stars spell out your name

And it seems to me you lived your life
Like a candle in the wind
Never fading with the sunset
When the rain set in
And your footsteps will always follow you
Along England's greenest hills
Your candle's burned out long before
Your legend never will

Loveliness we've lost
These empty days without your smile
This torch we'll always carry
For our nation's golden child
And even though we try
The truth brings us to tears
All our words cannot express
The joy you brought us through the years

And it seems to me you lived your life
Like a candle in the wind
Never fading with the sunset
When the rain set in
And your footsteps will always follow you
Along England's greenest hills
Your candle's burned out long before
Your legend never will

Goodbye England's rose
May you ever grow in our hearts
You were the grace that placed itself
Where lives were torn apart
Goodbye England's rose
From a country lost without your soul
Who'll miss the wings of your compassion
More than you'll ever know

And it seems to me you lived your life
Like a candle in the wind
Never fading with the sunset
When the rain set in
And your footsteps will always follow you
Along England's greenest hills
Your candle's burned out long before
Your legend never will



Confessions of A Teenage (Mutant Ninja Turtle) Sidekick

Lauren Pincente



The Sidekick. Nowadays it's correlated with prestige and money because it's packaged in the form of a neat little cell phone that can text message, e-mail, call, plan your day, transfer MP3 files and surf the web (ew, did I just say that?). For me, the term « *sidekick* » is one of notoriety. Once branded a sidekick, you will never banish that feeling of rejection, humility, and worse: being second rate.

Let's begin the story where we should. It was Junior Kindergarten, Ms. Pacini's morning class, and I was playing with a few boys. For the sake of embellishment and humour, I will say that I was probably wearing my favourite dog sweater (white with a black and white felt dog on the front and pink snowflakes surrounding him). I can definitely go on the record and tell you I was wearing jeans and NOT a skirt (I wasn't really able to wear skirts because I had a bad habit of sitting with my legs open and flashing my underwear accidentally to the class as a child. After Chris, the little blonde German boy I had a crush on, pointed it out to the whole class, I haven't worn skirts since). My hair was definitely messy and definitely in a ponytail. I will lie and say there was probably dirt on my porcelain face because I was a dirty child. As I ran around playing in the play area with the boys, I was comfortable in my surroundings. Then SHE came.

Lauren was shorter than me, brattier than me and she pronounced her name in the God-awful way that people were always pronouncing my name—I prefer to pronounce mine « *Le-ren* ». I hated her because even at the age of five, she was a huge bitch (she still is to this day; I ran into her at

the mall a few years ago and for someone who's four feet tall, she has a HUGE chip on her shoulder). She was the kind of girl that mothers loved. She always wore pretty little dresses and she was tiny and cutesy. Naturally, she was also the girl who all the other girls hated. We saw that what lay beneath her spoiled, bratty, princess-y ways was all that was pure evil. Lauren was a devil child.

She approached me and the boys and asked to play. No one really liked her but in a world where a person is your best friend for giving you a half eaten piece of bread with cheese and cheap bologna on it, you get over things pretty quickly. We quickly allowed her into our circle and decided to change the game. « *Ninja Turtles!* » one boy cried out. « *Yessssss!!!!* » we all cheered. (As children of the '80s and early '90s, we were huge fans of the *Ninja Turtles* dynamo. We ate Pizza Hut—and nothing but!—because the *Ninja Turtles* execs fooled us with their product placement. We bought the toys, the lunchboxes and everything else in the marketing scheme. We loved Vanilla Ice when he made his debut in the film and we bought the soundtrack so we could be just as cool, singing along to, « *Go Ninja, go Ninja, go!* » We loved *Ninja Turtles*.) So, there we were, a bunch of children so excited to be the tools of the entertainment industry. Communists would've hated us for being the very definition of what they oppose—we completely fell for all that corporate-America was trying to distract us with and we didn't even care to notice.

Each of the boys decided to start off the game by picking out characters. They quickly raced to shout out their favourites—« *Leonardo!* », « *Raphael!* », « *Donatello!* » and « *Michelangelo!* » all went quickly. Sensei Splinter and Shredder were the last to be picked. Then there was Lauren and I. She quickly pushed me to the ground and said,

« *I'm April O'Neil. You can be my dog.* » As a child, I was defenseless. I barked in agreement. It was not my most shining moment. After about two minutes of dragging my knees around the itchy St. Anne Catholic elementary carpeting, chasing after Lauren, I stood up and said, « *I don't want to be the dog. Can't I be Irma instead?* » In perhaps one of the nicest moments of her life, Lauren allowed me to be Irma, April O'Neil's dorky, four-eyed sidekick. She had defined me for the next twenty some odd years.

When psychiatrists want their patients to get better, they are not supposed to relapse the anger of childhood memories. Thankfully, I don't have a psychiatrist because if I did, I would definitely waste a lot of money on this one. (I know, you're thinking, « *wah, wah, cry me a river...* ») I remembered the « *Ninja Turtles* » situation years ago and have been pissed off about it since. Who did Lauren think she was? She was a bitchy little brat who gave me a cheap Barbie doll for my 6th birthday at McDonalds. She didn't own me! I didn't even want to be near her at my party, let alone be her sidekick! I was taller than her, smarter than her and people liked me better because I wasn't some major annoyance (which back then I think translated to « *poggy-head* »)! I still loathe the very thought of that girl...

For years since remembering, I have been trying to piece my life back together. Am I just an Irma in a sea of Aprils? Why can't I be the girl with the name that reminds me of a sunny, flower-filled month? Why am I stuck in a character whose name sounds like she'd be the deceased aunt of my grandmother with a heavy snoring problem? After a lot of soul-searching over the issue, I turned to, you guessed it, Wikipedia. This is what I found. April O'Neil is not only gorgeous with a handsome boyfriend named Craig but she was Channel 6's star reporter.

She went after any lead and did any crazy task for her story. April was a little go-getter and she was fierce and unafraid. I found biographies and different versions of the character, interesting trivia about her life, even an entire paragraph dedicated to discussion on the relevance of her yellow jumpsuit. Irma, on the other hand, got one line on Wikipedia: « *April was best friends with Irma, the secretary at Channel 6.* »

Even then, Irma was defined in relation to April. (It's not enough that April has a whole Wikipedia page ...) Just now I mentioned to a friend that I was writing this article about the *Turdes* and Irma and he said, « *What's Irma?* » My response? « *Exactly "tear"* ».

I started feeling really bad about myself after remembering Lauren and her wicked, wicked ways because her forcing me to be the sidekick was a prophecy on its own. I had many sleepless nights over my Sidekick-complex, wondering, wishing, hoping, dreaming but most importantly, crying. That is, until I found this:

« *Like Lois Lane before her, April was normally portrayed as a capable woman, but also filled the role of the typical plot device of damsel-in-distress. Her obsession with getting a story led to numerous instances of poor judgment which often resulted in her getting captured for the Turtles to save.* »

Moral of the story? Pretty girls are dumb. IN YOUR FACE, LAUREN! •



I remember really really wanting to be good at figure skating

Chandler Levack

I remember really really wanting to be good at figure skating. It wasn't fair. Every other girl I knew had already passed the classes forcing you to hold hands with six year olds but I hadn't. My friends were wearing costumes with shiny sequin appliques and ribbons, dressed as miniature whored-out versions of Mermaids and Princesses, and where was I? Flat on my ass for the millionth time, while 6 year olds did snow plows all over my tear-stained 9 year old face.

Being lousy at figure skating was just another way of proving that I was Not A Girl. I couldn't turn rope. I sucked at french-braiding, barely passing Andrea Martin's criteria on pigtailed. And the only gimp creations I could create at summer camp were the sorts of half together fluorescent string that even the most losery kids wouldn't accept for cemented best friend status. I had nothing going for me. Not even a pool (yet). So when figure skating lessons ended and my mother told me, «Chandler, I don't think this is working out», I didn't know what to do. The only things I was good at were organizing My Little Ponies into individual lines

of false social hierarchy and acting out fake sex melodramas with semi-clothed Barbies, both activities performed with my 5 year old brother. I blame the figure skating. And my name which already put me into the category of «wirdo kid who wears Sheryl Crow t-shirts», an identity I could only try on because nothing else fit.

I remember going to figure skating practice at the Brantford Skating Rink. Trying on the too tight white skates, slid over my purple snow pants, little children already double-axing their way to Olympic Status as I clutched the sides of the rink for dear life. I would venture out a little, and for one glorious moment sail on the ice before my ankles would flail and turn in, like the wings of a wounded duck. I could never do the moves, mostly anticipating the powdery taste of the hot chocolate soon to come and the flavoured slushies with the white dog on the container, flavours that tasted more like colours than the fruit they were trying to emulate.

«You're Canadian», my mother would tell me on the days when I would throw up my purple slush pants in disgust. «You're supposed to know how to do this». Eventually figure skating, like ballet classes and watercolour painting and God became one

of those things that «Chandler just didn't do». Every class trip to the skating rink filled me with dread. Every roller rink birthday party made a mockery of my coordination. And yet I still kept going, trying to learn how to skate. Spinning around with the Tonya Harding's onscreen, pretending my Lion King slippers had blades, my Teddy Ruxpin nightgown studded with precious jewels. Pretending I was going to be one of the beautiful girls, who skated over to give these goddesses their flowers and tiny presents, receiving pats on the head and kind words from the CBC announcers offscreen. But that was never going to be me. I tried to convince myself that figure skating was for losers, but the truth is, that it's just not. Figure skating is for perfect, pretty little girls thin enough to be thrown in the air by probably gay dudes. And that's all I ever wanted.

In first year residence, I joined a «first week» (whatever the hell that is) trip to go ice skating at Nathan Phillips Square. I thought it would put me out of my element, a spontaneous and kitschy way to spend a Thursday mid-evening. It turned out I was a worse skater than I thought. The skates pinched my ankles as I tried to turn my body. Glancing at all the residence couples holding hands while sailing to John Mayer hits, I felt

like I was back with the six year olds. With a start, I fell on my ass. Someone from the 6th floor plucked me up and then immediately performed a triple axel. There better be hot chocolate, I thought.

But eventually as I sailed around, I fell but grew less ashamed. So I was bad at figure skating I was good at more important things now, like feminist film theory and deconstructing *Dawson's Creek*. All my life I have tried to be athletic. I have had swimming periods and tennis times and took ski lessons. I tried out for cheerleading, field hockey and Badminton all to be denied. I can't win. But when eventually for 4 perfect minutes I was able to sail in a circle with the best of them before falling again, straight on my soaking jeans. So I felt a little vindicated. A six year old girl approached me. She was small, with silken blonde hair, big blue eyes, a pink fleece hat/scarf/mittens set. The whole works.

«Excuse me m'am», she said. «But I just wanted to let you know that you are getting better. Just keep trying. You can do it.»

I smiled. «Thanks kid. But I think I'm going to get some hot chocolate.»

Music Videos Done Right: A Chosen Assortment

Marc Saint-Cyr

The music video has come a long way since the Beatles first began making them in their *Sgt. Pepper's Magical Mystery Tour* days to create extra promotional material. By now, it has become an artistic medium of its own, allowing artists to tinker and experiment with cinematic techniques while sparing them the workload of a feature film production. The following is a scatter-shot assortment of bite-sized video works chosen for their craftsmanship, ingenuity and the notable names behind them—many of which eventually graduated to film director status. So fire up YouTube—let's face it, this is what it was really made for—and check out these pocket gems of cinematic skill.

«Sabotage» - The Beastie Boys

Easily considered the *Citizen Kane* of music videos, this is one of the breakthrough works of Spike Jonze, who more than proved his worth on the cinematic battleground with *Being John Malkovich* and *Adaptation*. Solely consisting of the Boys running around dressed in wigs, shades and fake moustaches and fighting crime, this video is packed with so much kick-ass energy that it perfectly compliments the song while at the same time making us wish there really was a cop show like this on TV—who wouldn't tune in to *Sabotage* every Wednesday night at 9?

«Imitation of Life» - R.E.M.

Before bringing *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* to the big screen, director Garth Jennings made this wonderfully complex video for R.E.M. Consisting of a single shot that is played, reversed and repeated over and over, it zooms in on numerous characters who appear to be taking part in the craziest backyard party ever—see if you can spot the guy getting set on fire, the TV showing Michael Stipe's face and the woman getting slapped in the face. Like a Where's Waldo mural come to life, this is easily one of the most entertaining videos out there.

«Tongue» - R.E.M.

Before *Little Miss Sunshine* burst onto the scene, its husband-wife directors Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris made music videos for such bands as the Smashing Pumpkins, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and R.E.M. «Tongue» focuses on assorted bored teenagers zooming out in front of the tube in the quiet safety of another suburban evening, mesmerized by an eyeliner-wearing Michael Stipe gently singing under a glimmering disco ball—like all great music videos, image and music blend together perfectly in this subtle mini-masterpiece. To get a flashier demonstration of Dayton & Faris' work, I'd recommend their video for the Smashing Pumpkins' «Tonight, Tonight», which pays homage to the famous Georges Méliès film *A Trip to the Moon*.

«No Surprises» - Radiohead

I'd say this video is a perfect companion not for its song, but for the landmark album it comes from, 1997's *OK Computer*. This constant close-up shot of Thom Yorke's singing head sealed in a glass tank that fills with liquid seems to sum up everything the album says about society, technology and dehumanization, the coldly flickering lights reflected in the glass bringing to mind the album's artwork and premise. The finishing touch is Yorke's screen-encompassing face, whose painfully blank expression wonderfully encapsulates the melancholia of the song.

«Windowlicker» - Aphex Twin

It's impossible to describe this video in words, so I'm not even going to try. Director Chris Cunningham's unique and bizarre imagination fuels this 10 minute-long spectacle, which shows you things that you'd never think could be done with an umbrella. If you've already seen it, you'll know what I'm talking about; if not, look it up on YouTube and bask in the weirdness.

«Try» - Michael Penn

Paul Thomas Anderson (director of *Boogie Nights*, *Magnolia*, *Punch-Drunk Love* and the upcoming *There Will Be Blood*) tried his hand at music videos a little later in his career than fellow '90s rebels David Fincher and Spike

Jonze, but the few that he did make are just as whimsical and visually engaging as his films. Perhaps his best one is this video, which consists of Penn walking down the longest hallway in the world and being bombarded by a flurry of characters (including a cameo by Philip Seymour Hoffman), lights, colors and special effects—all in one take. Just as delightful is his video for his former girlfriend Fiona Apple's «Paper Bag», which pays loving tribute to the big Technicolor musicals of 1950s Hollywood.

«Too Late For Goodbyes» - Julian Lennon

This video is here precisely because of how unremarkable it is. While the song from the former Beatle's son is alright (but a tad too repetitive), the real surprise is the fact that this was one of «Bloody» Sam Peckinpah's last projects before his death. But there's nary an exploding squib or slow motion shot or even an interesting camera angle to be found here—just a bunch of guys jamming in a recording studio while an unexplained silhouetted figure dances and gestures annoyingly off to the side. Verdict: ultimately disappointing, considering the talent involved in its creation. * Further reading for this article is available at www.innisherald.com.



These Encounters and Theirs

Chris Heron

Between March 11th, 2006 and the time of printing, Zack Snyder's *300* has raised an estimated 196 million US Dollars. Earlier this year, the Cinematheque held a mere two screenings of partners Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's *Qui loro incontri* (These Encounters of Theirs). Though seemingly disparate, these two films share a similar genesis and central interest. Just as *300* is an adaptation of Frank Miller's take on the Greek Battle of Thermopylae, *Encounters* is an adaptation of five segments of Cesare Pavese's *Dialoghi con Leucò* (Dialogues with Leucò), which employs classic Greek characters for its philosophical dialogues. These dialogues are meetings of the mortal and the immortal, the divine and the imperfect. The queries submitted by man naturally concern human existence, the nature of our beliefs and what future we will be provided—questions that philosophy has regularly attended to with or without gods. *300* postulates a more grim digital painting of man's nature, highlighting aggressiveness as the necessary accompaniment to our ideological interests. The salient question arising from both films and their relationship with Ancient Greece is how much, as a species, we are the same or have changed.

The past of *300* is conjured through CGI virtuosity, used to recreate the couture, equipment and (imagined) monsters of this particular battle—all of which no longer exist this side of a *Lord of the Rings* film. CGI is not alone in this end, though, as to remain straight-faced during the film's ridiculous dialogue requires a suspension of disbelief that needs the help of the near 2490 year gap. Despite these differences, the entry point of comparison to our current society seems to be the pornographic

saturation of the senses. A Hollywood blockbuster about the Spartans is possible because the Spartans themselves are positioned as a Hollywood blockbuster *avant la lettre*; only now we can rebuild them—we have the technology.

If such a battle requires CGI merely to be depicted, yet so widely appeals to contemporary interests, the mind naturally wonders where else our two periods share similarities. Despite whatever stammering defenses director Zack Snyder attempts to offer forth in the face of Iranian outrage, his film is naturally imbued in the dominant ideology. So when its pointed epilogue draws attention to notions of democracy and freedom, these are implicitly compared to those of today, constructing a clear interest in what manner history has repeated itself. In this sense, *300* posits that the answer to our future is at least somewhat found in the past.

For *Encounters*, the past is just as fertile a subject, but approached in an entirely different manner. Though the characters in the original text feature gods in the classic Greek sense, the film's actors are notable for being ordinary, contemporary Italian citizens. As the text's dense classically styled prose remains unaltered, a juxtaposition created in the film amplifies the implicit message of this modern appropriation: there is a clear connection to be made between the ordinary present of the actors and the exaggerated past of the text, but it's one that is considered with the two critically separate. In the film, the grandiose statements are delivered flat and the accompanying movements are subtly awkward, conveying a conscious gap between the modern speaker and the classic words. Yet the content of these dialogues remains provocative. What's compelling is how it overcomes such deliberate obstacles, as this is where the success of this cultural project lies.

Impressions of sincerity from the

actors are seemingly jettisoned due to the stilted delivery, but the generous pace of each segment allows them to encroach upon the performance: as the segments progress, one becomes attuned to the unease and, thus, they are able to highlight aspects of the human condition that are not effected by the obvious change in time—storytelling, as the form might suggest, being first and foremost. The words thereby overcome their artifice, speaking on a conceptual level that strikes one for how it can be identified with the present.

Similarly, as each segment is shot amidst beautiful outdoor locations, it would seem the gorgeous photography is constantly at odds for the spectator's attention. Again, though this can initially impede the dialogues as the centrepiece, it ultimately serves their purpose; here emphasizing a related timelessness that can be found visually in some portions of the world, and both visually and aurally rooting the classic preoccupations in such an environment—recognizable to modern audiences.

As the content of *Encounters* presents itself predominantly through dialogue, not action, it is formally portrayed with an appropriate and gripping minimalism. The length of each static shot conditions the viewer in such a way that when the camera does make a movement, it's the equivalent of what in *300* would be dozens of soldiers shooting off the cliff like so much barely-pubescent sperm. Yet this rare granularity is paid almost exclusively to the setting, not human excess and violent wet-dreams, further establishing the characters as beings existing within the beauty of nature, for which change occurs much more slowly.

The film concludes with a particularly moving shot: the camera's focus, for the first time ascended from the ground and into the sky, is distinctly set on a powerline between the heavens and Earth. As with the final dialogue that precedes this shot,

the only one between two mortals, *Encounters* seeks to draw upon the past to encourage thoughts and discussion about our present day and how we as a species have augmented or detracted from what we've already accomplished: a consideration of both at once—these encounters and theirs—not simply using one to justify or excuse the other.

There will always remain aspects of mankind and the human condition that are clearly discernible far into the past—the questions raised in dialogues with Greek gods applying to Pavese's Communist interests certainly attests to this. As *Encounters* illustrates, though, these are usually found in private reflections that concern the individual's grappling with existence. More specifically defined notions such as democracy and freedom are malleable over time as they often relate to the governing bodies of a specific place and period.

Thus, to attempt to draw parallels between the goals of battles as far apart as 480 B.C. and the present is a difficult proposition—one that must have only occurred to Snyder when attending to the reactions from Iran. It was then that he paradoxically chose to explain away the racism of *300* due to the very distance in time that is undercut by connections drawn in his film's own finale. The slow pace and exclusively philosophical content of *Encounters* ensures that it thinks, if it does nothing else, before it shoots, unlike what *300* has ultimately done, and is so compelling for that very reason. * Further reading for this article is available at www.innisheradd.com.

The Summer Looks Bright: Farewell and Goodnight

James Kang

So it begins in a couple of months. May is the kick-start month for the epic summer blockbusters that have molded me into the film lover and maker that I am today. Throughout the year I have been driven just a bit askew by all the great cinema of the world, but it is fun to look ahead to the months coming up and to think about *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*, *Spider-Man 3*, *Transformers* and *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*—lots of sequels and re-makes. Ah well, it's fun to watch things blow up and not analyze every tidbit of filmmaking that is on screen. That being said, it was a definite thrill ride to

write and talk about a variety of films.

I'm going to miss talking about the French New Wave, the films of Antonioni and the cinema of the future. You know, I've seen a lot of interesting cinema in this year alone. One of my favourite films I've seen is *The Red Shoes* by Michel Powell and Emeric Pressburger. I've had the opportunity to see films on the screen thanks to CINSSU: films of Stanley Kubrick as well as Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting*.

That being said, it will be nice to sit down with some popcorn and just let my mind relax. I'm most looking forward to *Spider-Man 3* and *Transformers*, just because I love the character of Spider-Man and I grew

up playing with the Transformers toys as a kid. My fellow writer Mark Saint-Cyr wrote earlier in the year about the Summer Blockbuster and Michael Bay so it's fitting to cap this year off with the same discussion on how watching cinema is great, but there is always room for watching movies.

I do want to take this chance to thank everyone that has been involved in this newspaper this year. I want to thank Daniel Dalimonte, my great editor, for introducing me to this journal-of-sorts to discuss films with my peers and other readers. I really want to thank Jenn Charles, the editor-in-chief, for running a great outlet for film discussion. We all dream to be able to talk about vari-

ous films—how they are relevant as well as how they affect us—but to be able to do it is a blessing. Chris Heron, as well, brought about the great idea to give the paper a little re-vamp and it definitely shows. There are a lot of other people that I do want to thank for this opportunity, so thank you. I want to thank people out there for reading if they did read, and hopefully if fate allows us to, I'll see you this summer... at the movies.

My greatest love and respect,
James Kang



The Best of the Film Critics

Alexandra Heeney

As the school year draws to a close and your dearly beloved *Innis Herald* disappears from your lives for the summer months, you are probably looking for a substitute to get your movie critiquing fix. Here I offer my picks for my favourite reviewers; I may not always agree with them but they're all a joy to read.

If you're looking for analysis-heavy reviews that are just-this-side of cinema studies essays, your best bet is *The New Yorker's* The Current Cinema, written by David Denby and Anthony Lane. Published once a week, and alternating between Denby and Lane each week, The Current Cinema takes on two current release films, critiques them in a very serious manner, and often finds creative ways of integrating the two reviews to compare the two films. Both Denby and Lane have the talent of capturing the entire essence of a film in a few short sentences. Even if you disagree with their interpretation of the film, there is usually an accurate and vibrant recap; you can almost relive the experience of watching the film when reading post-viewing. Sometimes Denby and Lane push their analysis a little too far, and sometimes I find I just don't buy into what they have to

say. Nevertheless, it's so beautifully written, and presented in such an interesting manner that even as I curse their very names for the insanity they're trying to sell, I can't help but admire the reviews simultaneously. If you're looking for their reviews of not-currently-in-release films, you can find them in the archives through Metacritic. You can read the most recent Current Cinema column for free on *The New Yorker's* website.

For somewhat lighter fare, try Roger Ebert's review. Although Ebert is best known for the direction of his thumb in his television show *Siskel and Ebert At the Movies*, his written work is equally worthwhile. Ebert has been out of commission for a few months due to illness, but all of his reviews from the past 25 years are up online and they are certainly an enjoyable read. While I often dislike films Ebert likes, I rarely like any films he dislikes, so he's generally a good start to help weed out the unwanted movies. Ebert is a true movie lover, unafraid to like a film simply because it was fun and enjoyable, even if it isn't particularly avant-garde, innovative, or different. Sure, he recognizes cliché when he sees it, but he also recognizes that recycled clichés aren't always bad, and good-plain-*Ocean's Eleven*-esque fun is worthy of praise. His reviews generally give a good picture of a film and let you know whether or not you're likely to

like a given movie, but he sometimes gives more spoilers than he ought to, but so is the case with many and most reviewers. I also enjoy his *« Great Movies »* entries. Every two weeks he writes a review of a film he deems *« great »* and a *« classic »*, from François Truffaut's *Stolen Kisses*, to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, to Cameron Crowe's *Say Anything*. The list is a good starting point for any film-buff-in-training, not to mention the reviews are informative and often illuminating. I will just warn you to watch out for his soft spot for blond actresses, which tends to cloud his judgement on films featuring such women.

For some middle ground between the depth of *The Current Cinema* and the whimsy of Roger Ebert, A. O. Scott's column on film in *The New York Times* is usually a good resource, if not a definitive one. I rarely agree with A.O. Scott's opinions wholeheartedly, but he usually provides insight and a new way of looking at films.

If classics or pre-1990s films are your area of interest, there is no better resource than Pauline Kael, my all-time favourite reviewer. She re-invented the movie reviewing genre, writing from the perspective of a movie fan, describing her personal experience of watching movies. Current writers like Roger Ebert owe much of their style to the great Pauline Kael. In her day, Pauline

Kael wrote for *The New Yorker*, and you can find large books of her old reviews. I particularly like her book *5001 Nights at the Movies*, which has 5001 short reviews, each a paragraph or two, of films from 1900 to 1990. Kael's style is short, sweet, and to-the-point, but also witty, sometimes deliciously malicious, and always thrilling. It really doesn't matter if you agree or disagree with Pauline Kael, you will laugh as she intended you to, and you can nod knowingly at her comment, even if you aren't entirely convinced by her analysis, there's always some element of undisputable truth to all her statements. All film critics should aspire to write as well as the great Pauline Kael. I certainly do.

What Denby, Lane, Ebert, Scott, and Kael all have in common is a genuine love for film, and, generally, the ability to separate the enjoyment of a film from its ultimate greatness. They won't steer you away from pure entertainment, but they will admit to and warn you of a film's pitfalls and failings. With just a little extra effort to seek these reviewers out you can acustom yourself to a whole new world of film writing. • Further reading for this article is available at www.innisherald.com.

